

to marriage, which show a development of the mores in regard to it. The formulas which are attached to the prohibitions in Levit. xviii are in the form of explanations of the prohibitions or reasons for them, but they furnish no real explanations.

Their sense is simply : For such is the usage in Israel, or in the Jahveh religion. That was the only and sufficient reason for any prescription. " After the consent of the parents of the bride had been obtained, which was probably attended by a family feast, the bridegroom led the bride to his dwelling and the wedding was at an end. No mention is made anywhere of any function of a priest in connection with it. It is not until after the Babylonian exile, after the Jews had become more fully acquainted with the mores and usages of other civilized peoples of that age, that weddings amongst them were made more solemn and ceremonial. After a betrothal a full year (if the bride was a widow, one month) was allowed the pair, after the captivity, to prepare their outfit, in imitation of the Persian custom (Esther ii. 12)." " At the end of the delay, the bride was led or carried to the house of the groom, in a procession, with dancing and noisy rejoicing, as is now the custom in Arabia and Persia. Ten guests must be present in the groom's house, as witnesses, where prayer formulas were recited and a feast was enjoyed." There were also prayers by all present at a betrothal " in order to give the affair a religious color." The pair retired then to a room where they first made each other's acquaintance.

Then two bridesmen led them to the nuptial chamber where they watched over them until after the first conjugal union. This last usage was not universal, and after some

experience of its
ambiguous character it was abolished. The
purpose was that
there might be witnesses to the consummation of
the marriage,
not merely to the wedding ceremony. The whole
proceeding
was a domestic and family affair, in which no
priest or other
outsider had any part, except as witness, and
there was no
religious element in it.¹ The prayer formulas were
uttered by
the participants and their friends, and they were
formulas of
invoking blessing, prosperity, and good fortune.

¹ Bergel, *Eheverhalt. der Judsn* ^ 19.